

RHINOPHILIGHTS

Mark Maglio is a graphic artist in Plainville, CT who spends his free time illustrating endangered and threatened animals. 'I started working back in commercial graphics but I still couldn't get away from animals. Each (drawing) I did, I got more involved. And, of course, along with this comes the awareness of things. You can't just draw animals and say, 'Oh, that's enough. I just like drawing them.' You start to get involved with how endangered they are and what's happening to their habitat. You start to be more knowledgeable of things that are going on. It comes with the territory.'

'Mark is active in many groups, such as Greenpeace, HALT (Help Abolish Leghold Traps) and the William Holden Wildlife Refuge. Usually Mark attends protests or sends donations but what he tries to do most is offer his artwork at no charge to the different groups. The wildlife protection groups then use his work to help in fundraising activities. He finds he keeps getting involved with the rhino. 'The rhino seems to be an animal that really sticks with me. They're not cute enough for people to consider them as a cause. It's unfortunate because they are very regal animals.' An illustration Mark has in process depicts a solitary rhino on an island...isolated. The drawing is called 'The Last Rhino.' But I don't want to be so negative," says Mark. "So I was going to word it at the bottom, 'The Last Rhino...Or Is It?'

"The lives of the animals that Mark chooses to draw are on the line now. Their fate is in the hands of man. Unless current conditions change, many will be extinct by the year 2,000. Mark's illustrations seem to capture their vulnerability and innocence. "When I do anything at all," says Mark, "the first and foremost thing that I always have to get across are the eyes and the expression of the face. Every second I'm working on the art, my mind never goes in any other direction but the animals themselves. It is painful to see this happening to them. I have pictures all over the place of rhino being shot or their horns cut off with chainsaws."

"Mark's pen and ink illustrations often take 40-80 hours to complete. He uses a technique called 'stipple' creating light and dark values by using dots. The closer the dots, the darker the values. The detail precision and patience this technique demands is overwhelming, hence the long hours. Each original illustration is about 24" x 30" in size. Most reference material for his work comes from his own photographs taken at various zoos. Mark still goes back to the San Diego Zoo where he is allowed into the cages for close-up photographs.

"In addition to his artwork, Mark also visits schools to educate students about wildlife and environmental issues. 'I was in a school and I'd show [the kids] a picture of a rhino and they'd say, 'Yeah, they cut their horns off.' There's a lot of exposure. Kids do pay attention to a lot of it. 'When people come up to me and say, 'What can I do? I can't go to Africa to save the elephants.' I say that you can do something here environmentally. It is all connected, the world we live in. If you're saving land, you may be saving a species of animal when you think about it. It's just like a sweater - everything all woven together. You pull one strand out and it's going to start falling apart. It's going to start unraveling."

